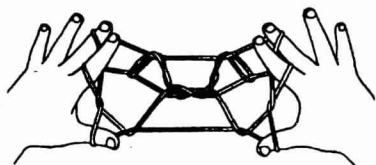


## INTERNATIONAL STRING FIGURE ASSOCIATION



*E Kuha, E Rati*

On Easter Island string figures are known as *kaikai*. Each year during the *Tapati* festival participants in the *kaikai* contest attempt to weave the

island's traditional designs and recite the ancient chants that accompany them, all with great style and charm.

The International String Figure Association was founded in 1978 to gather and preserve string figures from around the world. Members receive our annual *Bulletin* (200-page book), quarterly magazine, and semi-annual newsletter.

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**[www.isfa.org/~webweavers/isfa.htm](http://www.isfa.org/~webweavers/isfa.htm)**

## Moai Sightings

MOAI HAVE BEEN SIGHTED at the Polynesian Cultural Center, 'Oahu, by Gerry De Benedetti who sent us photos of little furry white-plush *moai* with floppy legs, blue feet and hands. With their small eyes and prominent noses, they look more like Mr Potato Head than our beloved statues.

And another alert reader, Helen Nielsen, contributed information on an artist who makes stucco Easter Island style *tiki* in his backyard at Escondido (California). Aside from the cone-headed *moai*, Mr Bosko Hrnjak also makes *tiki* out of palm trunks. These are created as décor for swimming pools. Mr Hrnjak is quoted as saying that he finds "beauty in the carvings many find grotesque." And he adds that: "... the facial features were distorted because their creators were trying to capture all of the many emotions the person had demonstrated while alive."

*The Times*, 26 December 1998

## What's New in Chile

A NEW DISPUTE has arisen over the *moai* that stands in front of the Fonck Museum, Viña del Mar, Chile. Governor of Easter Island, Jacobo Hey, insists the statue be returned to the island and declared that he will not accept "no" for an answer. Hey claims the statue is exposed to deterioration. On 12 January, the statue was spray painted by vandals but was promptly cleaned by museum conservationists. Senator Beltran Urenda affirmed that Hey's reaction is understandable but he rejected the idea of shipping the statue back to the island. Plans are to move the statue inside once the new museum is completed.

THE *MATA RANGI II* WAS LAUNCHED in Arica in early February. Some 3000 spectators came for the event. This is the second try by captain Kitin Muñoz whose last effort ended in failure when the *Mata Rangi I* sank shortly after sailing from

Easter Island. The idea is to test the theory of primitive navigation in reed boats across oceans.

AN INTERESTING ITEM appeared in *El Mercurio de Santiago* in February about an inexpensive way to reach Easter Island. It concerns making the trip on Chilean Navy ships that make periodic trips to the island. Civilians can go, but space is limited. One must take an I.D. card to the office of Naval Transport of the Armada 15 days before the sailing date, and call 5 days before sailing to see if he has been selected. The office is in the Plaza Sotomayor in Valparaíso. The trip takes 7 or 8 days to reach Easter Island. It costs around US\$261 for one way, and one eats the standard Navy food and sleeps in a berth in a long passageway, with his own sleeping bag. The stay on the island is only six days, or one can wait until a second ship to return. One way airfare, in contrast, costs US\$408.

## JUAN FERNANDEZ ISLANDS: THE GREAT TREASURE HUNT

Although not considered part of Polynesia, these islands (also known as the Robinson Crusoe Islands) are in the south Pacific, but lie closer to the coast of Chile. Their claim to fame, aside from being the source of the famous book —*Robinson Crusoe*—about Alexander Selkirk's isolation there, revolves around pirate treasure.

Headlines in Chilean newspapers in November trumpeted news of a "buried treasure" located at Puerto Inglés, on Juan Fernández Island. On 12 November, *El Mercurio de Valparaíso* featured the story of North American scientists searching for ingots of gold buried by 18th century pirates. Rumors continued the next day, now asking "Who gets the treasure?" and Islanders, wanting their full share of the loot, were stated to be "at the point of war" against the foreigners. The mayor of Juan Fernández, Leopoldo González, expressed the opinion that islanders were being steamrollered by the State and that some of the treasure should be used for their benefit. He said that there have been many treasure hunters and sunken ship explorers on the island in the past. González believed the treasure might belong to the famous English pirate Francis Drake who sacked cities along the Pacific coast in the 16th century.

By the 15<sup>th</sup> of November, excavation for the treasure (now said to be barrels of gold coins) was underway and the site was under guard to prevent looting. The next day, papers described "strange yellow rocks" that were found at the dig, bringing more tension to the search. The gold coins were now said to be associated with fabulous jewels: "...the largest treasure in the history of the buccaneers".

Working the site were two archaeologists of the Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales, Mario Vásquez and María Teresa Planella, who cleaned the "strange stones" with brushes and trowels and speculated that it could be a wall guarding the pirate treasure.

All this came about as the result of a theory by a North American historian, Bernard Keiser, who spent four years investigating in the public archives of England, the United States and Spain. He theorized that the treasure had been buried in 1716 by six crewmen of the English sailing ship *Unicorn*, with George Anson in charge.

The site of the search was in a rugged sector some 200

The site of the search was in a rugged sector some 200 meters up on the northeast coast of Puerto Inglés. Keiser was quoted as saying that the possibility of finding the treasure in that place was 99% certain. Citing information received from Keiser, the mayor said that fabulous riches would be found some 5 to 6 meters below the surface, and they expected to find "... a little more than 1,300 kilograms of gold and precious stones equivalent to 11.8 million dollars. The value of this would be sufficient to pay a third of Chile's external debt or to compensate in part for the commercial damage that the Asian financial crisis has caused."

Plans were being made to spend the money: the foreign mission would get 25% of the sum after Chilean experts selected the pieces of greatest historic or archaeological value up to 75% of the total, according to the law of National Monuments. The island's municipality with its 700 islanders, would profit from tourist activity, a proposed museum, and by selling souvenirs plus the right to film and photograph. The island's mayor was on site every day along with Keiser, the representative of CONAF, Iván Leiva, and police to guard the area.

Keiser (who described himself as a self-taught historian) was interviewed for the newspapers. He stated that he was certain that they had found the right place, according to documentation in foreign archives, and he estimated the treasure and the discovery to be equal that of the Inca or Egyptian ruins: a chest full of gold plus a gold rose and an emerald necklace. After studying the case, the Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales gave authorization to carry out the work, informing him that the State keeps 75% of what is found and he keeps 25%.

At this point, the governor of Valparaíso, Luis Bork, inspected the project, accompanied by the Commander of the 1st Naval Zone, Vice Admiral Eduardo Schnaidt Parker, and the Maritime governor of Valparaíso, Captain Bernal Badilla. Bork stated that Keiser's work was very serious and they were in the presence of a discovery of great historic and archaeological relevance.

*El Mercurio de Valparaíso* (13<sup>th</sup> November) continued its coverage, including rumors that "a scientific mission from the USA arrived on the island two years ago and with modern equipment connected to a satellite detected an enormous treasure of gold ingots of immense value." The article claimed that 11 professionals, North Americans and Chileans, were involved. Speculation continued for several more days, postulating upon sources for the treasure: an 18th century Spanish noble, named Juan Uribe y Echeverría, said to have buried 6 million gold pesos that were part of tribute from the Viceroyalty. Others hypothesized that it was the booty of English pirates from the 17th and 18th centuries, such as the buccaneer Bartolome Sharp who sacked a number of places in Chile and Peru in the 1680s.

Finally, the excavation hit bedrock, bottomed out, and nothing was found. The Gobernación Marítima of Valparaíso approved a new application by Keiser to work on the beach in the sector of Puerto Inglés. A three-month permit was given to excavate in 100 square meters of the beach, but local residents—claiming that they are the fourth poorest community in Chile—demanded a handsome cut of anything recovered. By the end of February nothing had been found and Keiser aban-

doned his search. Dreams of glory faded. A pirate's tale that seemed perfect for a Harrison Ford movie was quietly dropped.

The islanders of Juan Fernández were described as experiencing the full range of emotions – "...from Heaven back to Earth".

## What's New in Polynesia

CHANGING CLIMATE AND RISING WATER. Global warming is impacting low atolls in the Pacific. Rising sea levels are seeping into the soil in low-lying areas, making it too salty to grow taro. Some *motu* have been swamped: in Kiribati, the *motu* of Tebua Tarawa has disappeared, and other atolls are being abandoned in favor of higher islands. Kiribati has begun a resettlement program, as has Niue. A corollary of rising water is seen in higher sea temperatures. One report states that a large proportion of the world's coral has died this year.

*Pacific News Bulletin*, 13(11) November 1998

THAT SINKING FEELING. In our September issue, Vol. 12:3, p. 86-87, we commented upon an adventurer, Gene Savoy, attempting to prove a diffusionist theory by sailing around the world in a replica of an ancient sailing vessel. The Grand Ophir Sea Expedition was on the second leg of a seven-year voyage. After making repairs in Honolulu, Savoy and his crew sailed onward into the sunset on the *Feathered Serpent III*, heading for Australia. However, the ship went down only 14 days out from Honolulu. Made of Peruvian mahogany, the double-hulled ship disintegrated and sank 500 miles southeast of Christmas Island. After floating in life rafts for 24 hours, Savoy and his crew of six were rescued by a passing cargo ship. Savoy stated that this will not interrupt his around-the-world expedition. Despite this latest disaster, he intends to construct another ship and press onward. Savoy had to abandon another vessel in 1969: a *totorá* reed raft caught in heavy seas off the coast of Columbia.

UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC scientists, along with local environmental organization SPACHEE, have been working in eight villages to assist with problems of marine resource depletion. The villages are testing the effectiveness of declaring *tabu* areas.

*USP Bulletin*, 31(35) October 1998

A WORKSHOP OF THE START-Oceania program at USP discussed environment, economic development and poverty as linked problems. It was emphasized that global environmental change was social and not only an economic or environmental issue. The goal is sustainable development, but implementing this concept is difficult and depends upon changing patterns of production and consumption.

*USP Bulletin*, 31(32) October 1998

## PITCAIRN

A SEARCH FOR THE HISTORY OF THE *BOUNTY* is underway, as reported in *The Pitcairn Miscellany* for August 1998. Nigel Erskine is leading a team searching for what remains of the ship. The *Bounty* was burned and sunk, but Erskine believed that some materials were salvageable. The team includes the

Maritime Archaeologist for Tasmania, Mike Nash; the Senior News and Notes Conservator from the Western Australian Maritime Museum, John Carpenter; an archaeologist from James Cook University; and Erskine. The *Bounty* project will involve searching and mapping out artifact clusters in Bounty Bay. A further stage of the expedition involves digging at sites associated with the original settlement. One area of concern for the study is to determine the items taken off the *Bounty*. What did the first settlers believe important to start a settlement, and what did they discard with the *Bounty*? The recovered artifacts will be compared with those of the ship *Pandora*, formerly studied by Erskine. The *Pandora* was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef.

By November, musket balls, cannon balls, copper nails, bronze fittings were retrieved; the *Bounty* cannon has not yet been brought up, but may be salvaged before the project ends.

*The Pitcairn Miscellany* 41(11): November 1998

THE RAT ERADICATION PROGRAM on Pitcairn seems to be a success. Wildlife Management International Limited is in charge of this project. Their usual task is to restore islands in order to maintain the ecological values of plants and animals; this is the first time they have eradicated rats to benefit people. Already some birds are nesting successfully due to the absence of rats and feral cats.

*The Pitcairn Miscellany* 41(9) September 1998

#### TAHITI

THREE YEARS AFTER THE PROTESTS AND RIOTS that marked the resumption of nuclear testing, 64 people were tried, and 33 were released without penalty. Others were fined or given suspended sentences. Hiro Tefaarere was given the heaviest penalty: three years in prison and suspension of his political rights for five years. His deputy also received two years in prison. According to *Tahiti Pacifique* magazine, testimony indicated that the riots were provoked by police and forces close to President Gaston Flosse. The media reported that some of the charges were against peaceful protestors, while many persons involved in arson and looting were not charged. Prosecution witnesses were shown to have connections to Flosse or his party. The trial came at a time when political changes are occurring in French Polynesia, but the call for self-determination and independence continues.

*Pacific News Bulletin* 13(10), 1998

French Polynesia's President Gaston Flosse has been in Paris to meet with Jacques Chirac and others, seeking assurances that France will change French Polynesia's status from an overseas territory to a French overseas "country" thus making self-government possible.

*Pacific News Bulletin* 13(12), 1998

#### NEW ZEALAND

DNA STUDIES AT MASSEY UNIVERSITY (Wellington) confirm the oral history of the Maori. New Zealand was the last large landmass to be settled. Archaeological evidence suggests that the first residents arrived a mere 800 years ago and that they came from the Society or Marquesas Islands. Maori traditions say that their ancestors were not accidental migrants, but deliberately set sail for New Zealand in a fleet of eight to

ten canoes, and probably arrived some time in December. Various academics disagree and some suggest that New Zealand was settled by anything from a few castaways in a single canoe to 500 settlers arriving over the course of several generations.

To resolve the debate, Rosalind Murray-McIntosh and her colleagues at Massey University studied the DNA of a group of modern Maori. They looked at DNA from their subjects' mitochondria (the energy-generating components of cells, with their own genes, separate from those in the cell nucleus). Mitochondrial DNA contains a region that is particularly prone to mutation, and this allows a relationship between living people to be worked out by looking at which mutations they have in common.

The mitochondrial DNA from 54 women was examined. Only four different sequences in the mutation-prone region were found, in contrast to the 11 sequences that exist among residents of eastern Polynesia.

Dr Murray-McIntosh created hypothetical sets of ancestor groups, each with a different random selection of mitochondrial DNA from eastern Polynesia. She then made a computer model for the growth of these populations over 30 generations (corresponding to the 800 years of human habitation). By varying the size of the starting group, she was able to test what number of ancestors was most likely to have given rise to the genetic pattern seen today.

According to the calculations, the founding group of settlers contained between 50 and 100 women, with 70 being the most likely number. Because mitochondrial DNA, unlike nuclear DNA, is passed only from mother to offspring, it gives no direct evidence for the number of men. But presumably there were at least 150 individuals in the founding group. The sea-going canoes of the Polynesians could accommodate ten to 20 people each, so this estimate suggests that the ancestors of the Maori may well have arrived in the legendary eight to ten canoes.

#### HAWAI'I

CLOSING THE TRIANGLE. Nainoa Thompson has returned to Hawai'i from Rapa Nui where he spent two weeks studying the stars in preparation for the voyage of the *Hokule'a* to Easter Island. The Polynesian Voyaging Society is totally focused on the trip scheduled for next summer. Also involved is the National Aeronautics and Space Administration and Hawai'i's Department of Education. The trip will be the completion of 100,000 miles of voyaging in 25 years. Thompson is Hawai'i's first traditional navigator in 600 years and is closely associated with the rebirth of the Hawaiian ancient voyaging traditions.

A crew of a dozen will sail the *Hokule'a*, leaving Hawai'i in June; the society wants to use the voyage to bring closure to *Hokule'a*'s 25 year odyssey that began when it was launched off Oahu in 1975.

The *Hokule'a* is currently moored at Honolulu harbor and the navigator and crew will train for the trip until February, after which the *Hokule'a* goes into dry dock to prepare for the voyage. According to the schedule, the ship will sail June 1 from Hilo, for Nuku Hiva. From there, they will sail south to



rents and winds to reach Rapa Nui. Thompson is quoted as saying, "We could arrive on a dark and rainy night and might sail past it." And, "The more we start to try to figure out the best strategy, the more difficult it is." The *Hokule'a* will stay one month on Rapa Nui before heading to Tahiti. If all goes well, it will return to Hawai'i in January of 2000.

The Polynesian Voyaging Society has developed a major educational focus for the voyage and hopes to reach 100,000 students through various projects that relate to the trip. Plans include a virtual voyage to follow the *Hokule'a* in the classroom, with a web site focusing on the history and traditions of navigation and sailing strategies. The society hopes to line up programs with National Geographic and Discovery Channel.

*The Honolulu Advertiser*; November 22 and 26, 1998

## What's New in Hangaroa

MEMBERS OF CONSEJO #2 have been working with CONAF head, José Miguel Ramírez, to build *pircas* (stone walls) around some of the sites to restrict entry of vehicles. So far, Vaihu and part of Ahu Poukura have been enclosed. Walls are being constructed at Hanga Te'e and the complex at Ura Uranga Te Mahina/Akahanga. The *pircas* will keep out vehicles and some animals, but there is a worry that the walls will make it difficult for elderly visitors as a longer walk is now necessary. Formerly, vehicles could drive directly into many of the sites.

SPEED BUMPS (called *lomo de toro*) are being installed by



Azul Tahai is new health food-juice bar on the main street, of Atamu Tekena street (formerly called Policarpo Toro), next door to Hotu Matua's Favorite Shoppe.



Hotu Matua's Favorite Shoppe has a new and expanded location, next door to the old store.



Remember the old gas station? Times have changed. Juanito Edmunds shows off his modern up-to-date gas station that features a mini-mart.



Another new structure, this one at the airport, is being constructed to house the airport fire engine and other equipment.

the Municipalidad on the towns unpaved roads in an effort to slow down traffic, particularly taxis. About a dozen speed bumps are now in place. These appeared at a good time, as people were placing larger and larger rocks in intricate patterns in the road to discourage speeding—making the roads very dangerous, particularly at night.

THE FIRST ECOLOGICAL self-composting toilets now are in place at Tahai and more are on order and will be installed at 'Anakena and Tongariki. The toilet at Tahai is near a concession stand run by a local family who will also be in charge of the new facility.

A HYDROPLANE was delivered to the island, to be used for air/sea rescues near the island. Commander-in-Chief Rojas of the Chilean Air Force inaugurated the air rescue center, arriving in a Gulfstream jet piloted by Rojas himself. Other happenings at the airport include terminal expansion, a new luggage belt and a new SEI (fire extinguishing service) building. The underground electric net for the airstrip illumination system will be renewed as well as the energy sources for emergency and radio systems.

IN JANUARY, THE R/V *ATLANTIS* arrived with the submersible *ALVIN*. They stopped to drop off one researcher who had a family emergency and one of the cooks (much to the de-

light of some of the people on the ship). The scientists were allowed a few hours to visit on the island and were astonished by the changes that have occurred since their last visit.

A SHOW ENTITLED *EL MAR PASCUENSE* appeared recently on Chilean TV. It featured images of divers spearing, angling, and netting fish, and harvesting coral. Most significantly, it showed a Rapanui woman cleaning several dozen heads of coral, getting them ready for the tourist trade; and a marine biologist in the deep (in scuba gear) carefully covering a chunk of coral with a plastic bag and then prying it off the rock to which it was attached. Later, on dry land, he used a knife to search in-between the coral's protuberances and came up with several small shrimp, a couple of tiny crabs, and other living creatures. All these, he noted, would have eventually been food for fish, but with the reduction in the quantity of coral, these natural breeding and maturing places for fish as well as their food supply are being eliminated. An island elder came on the screen to say that 50 years ago there were *cualquier cantidad*—a huge amount of coral, but now there is hardly any. The program also showed an islander knee-deep in water and holding aloft a burning torch, then reaching down and pulling out a lobster. The voice-over said that the population of lobsters has decreased drastically in the last couple of decades. How well we know. Twenty years ago it was a rare week that went by when lobster wasn't served at least once. Over-harvesting has made it an expensive rarity.

A NEW SCHOOL will be constructed at the site of the old leper sanitarium; this school will encompass the upper grades, corresponding to high school level.

EASTER ISLAND NOW HAS ITS OWN CONSEJO DE MONUMENTOS de Rapa Nui! The National Council of Monuments has been setting up regional councils in order to have decisions made locally. The Rapa Nui Council includes the Governor, Mayor, Sergio Rapu, two representatives of each of the Council of Elders, the Director of the Museum, and the head of CONAF on the island. From now on, every permit or anything concerning archaeology, will be discussed on the island and then the local decisions will go to the Consejo de Monumentos in Santiago for final approval.

THE POSSIBILITY OF THERE BEING A SENATOR from Rapa Nui was raised by Vice President of the Senate, Mario Rios. However, other senators objected and rejected the idea of an Easter Island senator. Their reason is that, by so doing, there would have to be constitutional reform, making Easter Island into a new Region. They think it a better idea to just have a Representative from the island. And they pointed out that only 1500 people on the island have the right to vote, far less than the 40,000 in the XI Region, the smallest of all.

IN A MOVE SURE TO CONFUSE everyone, the municipalidad has decided to rename some of the streets in Hangaroa village. Policarpo Toro has been renamed Atamu Tekena (after an 1888 island leader), and the old Atamu Tekena street is now called Capt. Policarpo Toro Hurtado. Fortunately, no one pays much

attention to street names (now painted on the curbs) and all mail comes into the post office anyway.

CONAF (National Parks of Chile) has produced a nice brochure about Rano Raraku for the visitor (in Spanish). A self-guided walk with 14 stations is described in the brochure along with a plea for conservation. Available from CONAF on the island. It has been translated into English and there are hopes to produce this version soon. A large interpretative sign has been installed near the parking area at the quarry.

NEWS FROM THE EASTERN PACIFIC RESEARCH FOUNDATION: The Eastern Pacific Research Foundation has temporarily suspended efforts to excavate on Easter Island due to on-going political strife and a "... general hostility toward any archaeological work". However, for 1999, they are making plans for a project in the Gambier Islands. Anyone interested in that project may contact Robert Lemker at 390 Glade Road, Suite 108-345, Colleyville, TX 76034, or email at <eprf@write.com>

ANOTHER EARTHWATCH PROJECT is scheduled for Easter Island, with sessions held during the time from 3 October to 20 November, under the direction of Dr Christopher Stevenson. Anyone interested in participating should contact Earthwatch (Anne Geoghegan at 800-776-0188, ext. 181; or by fax: 617-926-8532).

## Letters to the Editor



Dear Editor:

*Rapa Nui Journal* (Vol. 12:3) September 1998 contains an article contributed by Mr. Vince Lee in which we are treated to his opinions on the recent *moai* transport field tests of Dr. Van Tilburg and her UCLA team. It should be known by all readers of *RNJ* that Mr. Lee was not involved in any capacity with Van Tilburg's research, is not a spokesperson for the team's results, and is not in any way connected to the project report.

It is unfortunate that Mr. Lee found it necessary to attack persons and institutions through *RNJ*. Readers may draw their own conclusions as to the intent of Mr. Lee's rather undignified, self-aggrandizing words or *RNJ*'s publication of this article.

Articles such as Mr. Lee's, containing negativity and personal attacks, should be edited before being published by *RNJ*. Is not the effort of human expression better spent building up rather than tearing down, developing cognitive connectivity rather than piece-meal rambling, and integrating grander, broader understandings of people, culture, and history? Is there not an implied responsibility of *RNJ* to "take the high road" with regard to material it publishes for the world to read? Is there not a responsibility for contributors to write in a professional manner?

Mr. Lee was brought to the Island by the NOVA television production company as a late addition to the on-camera cast who were to be featured in the NOVA documentary based on the UCLA field tests. Mr. Lee's function was to generate counterpoint, or better yet controversy, in on-camera scenes, leading to an adversarial tension in the final televised program. NOVA